

Dear Chairs Linehan and Anwar, Vice Chairs Welander and Bradley, Ranking Members Martin and Dauphinais, and Members of the Committee on Children,

My name is Isabella Marin. I am a resident of New Haven and am testifying to communicate my strong support for Connecticut's SB2: An Act Concerning The Safety, Education And Social Equity Of Children In Response To The Pandemic.

This pandemic has been difficult for everyone. I have struggled over the past year, but I am lucky that I've been able to develop strong friendships outside of school, that I can live in college, and that I can use technology. For kids who depend on school for social interactions, the last year has been a nightmare. Evidence suggests that the social isolation and loss of in-person services caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has increased teen suicide rates across the U.S. Across the state of Connecticut, public schools remain quite segregated. There is a \$639 million funding gap between public school districts with BIPOC student populations of at least 25% and districts with white student populations greater than 75%, so it is often students of color with fewer mental health resources.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the challenges students face every day. The effects of this pandemic, especially in children and adolescents will be felt for years, even after everyone has returned to in-person learning. SB2 seeks to address mental health challenges of Connecticut's students by establishing mental health training for many school employees and licensed healthcare professionals. Funding data shows that lower-income students and students of color are disproportionately impacted by the current lack of mental health access in schools. Passing this bill would be a crucial step in addressing and improving the social-emotional and educational outcomes of all students in the state.

I strongly support SB 2 and urge you to favorably vote the bill out of the Committee on Children.

Sincerely,
Isabella Marin
New Haven, CT